

# South Dakota National Guard

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## NEWS RELEASE:

### **Army chaplains: Serving those who serve**

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129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

VERMILLION, S.D. – Members of the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard have worked continuously since May 29, 2011, to battle the Missouri River that threatens to flood several towns in southeastern South Dakota.

The rising water is not the only battle on the front lines of this emergency. Another battle is for the moral and spiritual well-being of those involved in times like these during this historic flooding event.

Military chaplains rise to this challenge and embrace their calling in the service of others.

Armed with a Bible and a mission to serve, chaplain and newly appointed 1st Lt. David Stimes, of Beresford, joined the Chaplain Corps in April 2011. He is currently assigned with the 153rd Engineer Battalion and is now performing ministerial duties in the Dakota Dunes area during the flood relief.

As an Army chaplain, Stimes is tasked with many things while serving as a spiritual guide to servicemembers, such as ensuring members of the military have the opportunity to practice their own religious convictions and help promote the general well-being of the troops and their families.

The first step to accomplishing those tasks is building relationships, said Stimes.

“It is a big task,” he said. “Here you have a short time and 700 Soldiers. You do the best you can to get around to as many as you can.”

Building relationships is important, said Stimes. Many people are uncomfortable talking to a stranger about problems that are personal to them. That is why chaplains are a vital avenue for commanders and units to have a trusted person that people can turn to.

One of the main challenges Stimes faces during this flood support operation is finding time to offer church services that works for everyone.

“The hard part about that is people are on different shifts, and shifts have been changing,” said Stimes.

Even though people have expressed interest in attending, getting a good turnout for worship services has been difficult, he said, as people are very tired when they are released after a long day at work.

When Stimes is not preparing for a sermon or leading a worship service, he takes his work out to the troops in the field.

“A lot of what we are doing is getting out and visiting Soldiers,” said Stimes. “We are always looking at morale and for opportunities for things they might need.”

Stimes said he and his assistant have helped with sandbagging out in the field, provided one-on-one counseling, and on occasion, given rides to servicemembers that needed to go home for family emergencies.

As with most major events, the flooding in South Dakota has provided Stimes with memories that he’ll never forget. One such memory was about a flood victim in Wynstone.

“She was someone who very clearly had joy in her life, even in such trying times,” said Stimes. This was significant because he gave a sermon on finding joy in times of trial, referring to this historic flooding event, the day before he met this woman.

To see that woman living out the message that I gave the day before in my sermon is something I’ll take with me for a long time, said Stimes.

The battle for the moral and spiritual well-being of the servicemembers is no easy task, but Chaplain Stimes has taken this fight to heart, just like the many military chaplains before him.

“I’m supporting my country by primarily supporting God,” said Stimes. “My job is to serve those who are serving.”

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**061211-A-T8517-321** VERMILLION, S.D. - Chaplain David Stimes, with the Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion, Huron, gives a sermon Sunday, June 12, 2011, at the University of South Dakota dorms to servicemembers who are assisting with emergency flood operations in southeastern South Dakota. (SDNG photo by Spc. Andrew Turner) (RELEASED)



**110613-F-UL435-069**

DAKOTA DUNES, S.D. - Chaplain David Stimes (far left), with the Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion, Huron, helps raise morale by visiting with members of the 211th Engineer Company as they perform levee patrols along the Missouri River, Monday, June 13, 2011. (SDNG photo by Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young) (RELEASED)

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